(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) No, Sir. As against 18.22 million assessees as on 1.4.1999, the total number of tax payers in the country as on 31.1.2000 stands at 20.59 million. It is unlikely that this number will cross the 25 million mark by 31.3.2000.

(b) The Department has launched a massive awareness campaign in the towns notified under the "One by Six Scheme", as a result of which, a large number of tax payers are likely to be added by the end of the current financial year.

Amendment to Insurance Act

2050. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the General Insurance Corporation has requested Government to amend the Insurance Act to enable Public Sector Insurance Companies to venture into the banking sector and compete with Banks and Financial Institutions in the wake of the opening of the insuranac sector for private participation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) Sometime back, the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC) had informally suggested to the Government to amend Section 27B(4) of the Insurance Act, 1938 to enbale GIC and its subsidiary Companies to invest more than the permissible limits in shares of banking/investment companies to acquire controlling interest. The GIC was asked to place the proposal before its Board. However, no formal request has been made by GIC in this regard.

Demonetisation of Higher Value Notes

2051. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU:
SHRI NANA DESHMUKH:
SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether ISI has been printing counterfait currency in the neighbouring countries to destabilise the Indian economy;

(b) whether it is a fact that normally the currency is of higher denomination;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to demonetise/withdraw the higher value notes;

(d) if the answers to part (c) above be in affirmative, by when; and

(e) if not, what other steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) There are no confirmed reports that ISI has been printing counterfait currency in the neighbouring countries to destabilies the Indian economy. However, remorts available with Government indicate that in some places in Pakistan, fake Indian currency notes have been printed and diverted to various locations in India.

(b) As per reports received, the recovery/seizure of Rs. 100 and 500 denomination notes is maximum during the last 5 years from 1995-96.

(c) to (e) Since the total quantity of fake notes recovered/seized is only a miniscule of the total notes in circulation. The Govt. is serious in the matter and has taken the following steps in this regard:—

(i) A High Level Committee has been constituted to go into the entire gamut of issues pertaining to the security dimension of Indian currency.

(ii) A six-member Fact Finding Committee under the convenorship of a Deputy General Manager, RBI, comprising experts on note-printing/currency paper, etc. has been set-up for examining the seized fake notes to enable the Government to take remedial action vis-a-vis printing and security features.

(iii) RBI has undertaken a publicity campaign about security features incorporated in the genuine notes.

(iv) The Security features of Rs. 500 deno. Notes have been widely published in the print & electronic media to help the people to detect fake notes.

(v) A film on security features of Rs. 500 deno. notes produced in English, Hindi and other regional languages is being repeatedly telecast on Doordarshan.

(vi) For the benefit of public a booklet has been brought out which *inter-alia*, describes the features of genuine notes. This booklet has been placed on the RBI's Website besides being available to the public at RBI's Issue Offices. All public sector banks have been instrcuted to continue to accept genuine 500 rupee notes.

(vii) The Central Bureau of Investigation has created a special unit for exclusive investigation of counterfeit currency note cases.

(viii) The BSF has alerted its forward troop to be more vigilent in checking the smuggling of notes across the border. Instructions have also been issued to all State Governments particularly, border states, to be more vigilant.

(ix) A third series of 500 rupee note in the new colour scheme with additional security features is in the final stage of approval and these would be issued shortly. Initially, these notes are proposed to be issued to the public in exchange for the 500 rupey notes issued in 1987, i.e., those with Ashoka Pillar watermark in which forgeries have been detected.

Progress in implementation of Uniform Sales Tax

2052. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any review on the progress made in the implementation of Uniform Sales Tax by various States and Union Territories; and

(b) if so, the details of the progress in various Sates and Union Territories as on date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Government has constituted a Standing Committee of Finance Ministers of eight States to monitor the implementation of uniform floor rates of sales-tax by States and Union Territories. As on date, the Sates of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, and Union Territories of Delhi and Chandigarh, have implemented the policy of uniform floor rates of sales tax.